



Bill C-18: Amendments Needed to Ensure that Not-for-Profits and Small Players Will Benefit from Online News Act

Ottawa (November 14, 2022)—The Canadian Association of Community Television Users and Stations (CACTUS), the Fédération des télévisions communautaires autonomes du Québec (the Fédération) are concerned that Bill C-18, which is based on similar legislation in Australia aimed at encouraging Google and Facebook to compensate producers for the online news that they redistribute— will not include small not-for-profit news providers such as community broadcasters.

The two associations, which represent community TV, as well as other associations representing community broadcasters were unanimous in their briefs to the Heritage Committee studying Bill C-18 that—based on the Australian experience—community media will likely be left out of the news compensation scheme unless amendments are made. Since community media are often the only media present in smaller communities, ensuring that local news and information continues to be available in Canada's hinterland is at issue.

Although the Heritage committee heard from an Australian witness (Mr. Rod Sims) that the Australian scheme was good for small businesses, the brief submitted by the NCRA and the CRFC reports that of 452 community radio stations in Australia, fewer than a dozen have been able to negotiate any compensation for their online news from Google or Facebook. The NCRA also tested the current clause in the draft C-18 that states that Canadian companies will be eligible for the scheme if they “*are qualified Canadian journalism organizations as defined in subsection 248(1) of the Income Tax Act*”. While four NCRA members attempted to qualify—even though they meet the published eligibility criteria—their applications were rejected. Catherine Edwards, the Executive Director of CACTUS noted, “It seems these rules were created for print media, not for broadcasters.”

Amélie Hinse, Directrice of the Fédération added, “The other problematic stipulation in the draft bill is that there be a minimum of two full-time employed journalists in order for a news organization to qualify. Community media that serve smaller communities are powerhouses of local news production because they work with citizen journalists and local organizations, but they may have only one or two employees altogether.”

Organizations representing the community element in the broadcasting system have recommended alternate language that would recognize not-for-profit broadcasting undertakings as being eligible. Their inclusion will help ensure that local news and information continue to be available in the hundreds of small and diverse communities they serve.

– 30 –

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